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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: DEATH OF ZARQAWI

¶1. Summary: All UAE Arabic and English dailies featured Al-Zarqawi's death. An unsigned editorial in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic daily "Al-Ittihad" 6/10 described Zarqawi's death as the beginning of the end if Iraqis would all unite together against those targeting their security. "Al-Khaleej" laid the blame for instability in Iraq on the presence of the occupation forces and stated that violent operations done by people like Zarqawi are a natural, unhealthy reaction to occupation. A columnist in "Al-Khaleej" stated that the vacuum created by Zarqawi's death would be hard to fill. An editorial in English daily "Gulf News" states that Zarqawi's death will have little impact on the violence in Iraq. End summary.

¶2. A front-page unsigned 6/9 editorial in Abu Dhabi-based semi-official Arabic daily "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000) headlines: "The beginning of the end", and opines:

"The world was relieved at the death of the tyrant of terror and destruction whose criminal operations claimed thousands of innocent lives. But the question remains: Has terrorism been put to an end by Al-Zarqawi's death? The fact that Al-Zarqawi died does not mean it is the end. It is the beginning of the end if, and only if, the Iraqis decide, starting today, to not allow the existence of such killers among them, if they all unite together to fight anyone who dares to twiddle with their security, if they agree that no one will divide them under conspiracies of factional conflict, and if they chose to follow their elected parliament and their legitimate government. This and only this will give them a chance to launch a national conciliation roadmap under the slogan "Iraq or nothing".

¶3. A 6/9 editorial in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" (circulation 85,000) headlines: "Is Iraq on the verge of a new diversion?" and reads:

"...The announcement of Al-Zarqawis' death along with his associates is a special development... It is difficult to look at Zarqawi's death as promising relief in Iraq, because Iraq's situation is an abnormal revolt against basic laws. The new government has been fully formed and on the Political security list, disarming militias is a top priority, as promised by President Nori Al Maliki. No two can disagree on the significance of this priority; maybe Zarqawi's death enforces the government's seriousness in achieving this priority..."

¶4. Under headline "Stability in Iraq", Sharjah-based Pan-Arab daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 85,000) wrote 6/9 unsigned editorial:

"American and the British officials realize the magnitude of the stalemate facing occupation forces in Iraq. This was clearly shown in the statements that came close to reality when it was asserted that the death of Zarqawi was a severe blow to the Al-Qaeda network, but will not however lead to stability in Iraq. The occupation forces committed multiple mistakes, first by imposing its occupation, second by dissolving Iraqi establishments which caused chaos from the first moment. These are huge mistakes which the occupiers are now beginning to admit. And because "occupation" is a hostile conduct, it naturally breeds resistance and many unhealthy phenomena. Stability in Iraq will return once the occupation forces withdraw because what is happening right now is a direct and indirect consequence of their existence."

¶5. Under headline "Zarqawis", a Lebanese columnist, Saad Mehio, wrote 6/9 op-ed in Sharjah-based Pan-Arab daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 85,000):

"Some suspicions were aroused when Colin Powell used Zarqawi's name in 2003 to justify invading Iraq while speaking of some relations between Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein through Zarqawi. Heretofore, Zarqawi did not play any major role in Iraq or in Al Qaeda itself. Nevertheless, the United States turned him into an international star, only to subsequently admit that it was relying on "wrong information"... The question now is: Will Zarqawi's end lead to the end of all acts relating to Zarqawi? Not necessarily. Its network, that is said to be composed of 800 to 2,000 militants, is still there and could in

the very near future retaliate by further expanding its revengeful operations... Still, the absence of a strong person such as Zarqawi must leave a vacuum that cannot be filled..."

¶6. Under the headline "Things in Iraq may not get better" Dubai based English daily "Gulf News" (circulation 95,000) opines in an unsigned editorial 6/10:

Once the euphoria over the killing of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi is over, the question arises: What next? There is a general air of speculation, if not expectation, that the situation in Iraq will now get better, and the new government with all positions only now filled will restore law and order, if not sanity, to the region. But there are others, including U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who believe there is still more violence to come; the killing of Al Zarqawi, although significant, will not put an end to the killings in Iraq or elsewhere. It is surprising there should be people who think Al Zarqawi's death will end the insurgency. After all, for some time now we have been informed that Al Qaida cells work autonomously; often two or more cells working in the same area will not know of the others' existence. Which is why, we have been led to believe, it makes it so difficult to infiltrate such groups, or even track them down. Added to this is Al Zarqawi, although pledging loyalty to Al Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden, in fact differed on how terrorist action should proceed. Bin Laden wanted to act against Western nations which have a presence in the Arab world; Al Zarqawi wanted to usurp Arab governments in the region to introduce strict Sharia law, which is an irony considering his early riotous behavior and later contraventions of Islamic teachings. It would therefore be naive to assume the death of this one terrorist will change the events in Iraq; it will not.

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